

## **Leader's Report – Full Council 14 October 2015**

**Councillor Mike Cheshire: Leader**

**Corporate Strategy, Finance.**

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### **Corporate Strategy**

The HBC Corporate Strategy (2015 – 2020), which was agreed and unanimously voted upon on the 18<sup>th</sup> February 2015, remains the core document for all the activity that the Council is engaged in. We continue to consider how our services can be maintained, our income streams achieved and how efficiencies can be made.

These activities include our negotiations with the 5 x authorities, NORSE, our partnership with EHDC and the continued developments with the Combined Authority initiative.

Each Cabinet paper, each initiative and each proposal that is originated from Members and/or Officers will need to have a specific reference to the Corporate Strategy, thereby ensuring that we do not stray from our agreed way forward.

### **Finance**

The Finance Team has completed the Statement of Accounts on time and they were subsequently audited by the external auditors, Ernst and Young. Following a successful audit which resulted in an unqualified audit opinion, the accounts received formal sign off at the Governance and Audit Committee meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> September.

The project to upgrade the Havant Borough Council financial system from Cedar to Civica is now completed, and the new system is "live".

The Budget process for 2016/17 has now commenced, with members of the finance team liaising with Service Managers to build budgets. This process will continue over the next few months with all areas of income and expenditure reviewed with Service and Budget Managers where appropriate so as to arrive at a budget ready for Full Council review and approval in February. Once again, Havant BC will be adopting a "zero based budgeting" approach, which means that each budget line is re-evaluated thoroughly, starting from a zero base. Budgets should be set according to each Service's Business Plan.

The Finance Team has also been heavily involved in the various significant Projects that are currently affecting Havant BC. These include the Five Councils' Corporate Services project, the service future of the Depot, and

personalisation of Council services. The work that Finance have been undertaking has included giving financial advice and costing of the variety of options and decisions that have and will continue to be required as the Council plans its future strategy.

### **Combined Authority (CA)**

I have recently appointed the Combined Authority Working Group (CAWG) which consists of 3 recently elected Councillors. They have the remit to look at all aspects of this Central Government Initiative and ascertain if it conflicts at all with our own Corporate Strategy. They have the authority to discuss any aspects the CA with any Cabinet Member, Member or HBC Council Officer.

I have attended a number of Hampshire Council Leader's meetings to finalise the "Devolution for the People of Hampshire and the IOW" prospectus (which all members received electronically on the 4<sup>th</sup> September 2015). Government Ministers and Officials are continuing to engage with Hampshire Councils to discuss various aspects of the bid, and we expect to hear further how these negotiations are moving forward in November.

There are a number of real issues that need to be debated at the Leader level before coming to Full Council for decision – these issues include: Governance, Business Rates and Advanced Housing Delivery.

Members will have already received the prospectus, in addition a number of CA Newsletters have been distributed, a seminar was provided on the CA/Devolution on 2<sup>nd</sup> September, and a Working Group has been set up within the Membership.

The amount of effort in ensuring that you are all kept up to date with events is a demonstration on how important I feel this initiative is.